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SIPDIS

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TAGS: PTER PREL MOPS MARR TU IZ

SUBJECT: IRAQ: TURKISH ENVOY KARAOSMANOGLU SHARES
IMPRESSIONS FROM 3 WEEKS IN IRAQ - MIXED MESSAGES FROM
IRAQIS - NO DOUBT TURKISH TROOPS WOULD BE ATTACKED, US
TROOPS IMPRESSIVE

Classified by DCM Robert Deutsch. Reasons 1.5 b and d.

Summary

¶11. (S) DCM met Sept. 17 with Turkish MFA Envoy Karaosmanoglu, who spent three weeks in Iraqi in August/Sept. on a fact finding mission to help the GOT determine whether to support a Turkish troop contribution to a stabilization force in Iraq. Karaosmanoglu said most Iraqis he met were opposed to occupation forces in public and receptive to the idea of Turkish troops in private. Karaosmaoglu believes that no matter where and under what mantle the Turks deploy in Iraq, they would be shot at, leading to tensions between Turkey and Iraq, and possibly between Turkey and the US. Despite that, he said he believed Turkey should send troops, but to a sector far from Kurds, Turkmen and Iranians and one with a low level of violence. He noted that he had not been asked to recommend whether or where Turkish troops should deploy and cautioned that he was regarded as a bete noir on Iraq within the MFA. He had a number of suggestions for the coalition (whose troops he praised as extremely professional and proper) and CPA, including that they give Iraqis more ownership of the situation, employ more Iraqis, intensify the coordination between the military and CPA, and emphasize the coming restoration of full sovereignty and the inviolability of Iraq's borders. He warned against excluding tribal leaders from Iraq's new structures and urged the CPA to find a way to incorporate Ayatollah Sistani and his supporters.
End Summary.

¶12. (U) DCM called on MFA envoy Amb. Karaosmanoglu Sept. 17 for a readout of his recent three-week fact-finding mission to Iraq. Karaosmanoglu expressed his gratitude to CPA and CJTF-7 authorities in Baghdad, especially Amb. Bremer and LTG Sanchez. He asked that we convey his "heartfelt appreciation for the assistance and the welcome" extended to him and his delegation. Karaosmanoglu also said he was struck by the discipline and professionalism of US forces.

Sistani is One Key to Iraq

¶13. (C) Karaosmanoglu told us he had met more than 100 people in 25 meetings during his trip, including some who may have been involved in acts of resistance against the coalition. He met with a variety of Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen, Christians, Sunni, and Shia, mostly in Baghdad, but also in Samarra and Najaf. He also met with Governing Council member Ahmed Chalabi and with Ayatollah Sistani. Karaosmanoglu said he spoke at length with Sistani's son and advisor, Mohammed Reza Sistani, who told Karaosmanoglu that he did not want a secular or an Islamic state, "not like France, but more like a "religious" US." Sistani strongly supported the unity of Iraq. Karaosmanoglu said he could not overstate the importance of incorporating Sistani into coalition efforts to get Iraq back on its feet.

Even if Welcomed, Turkish Troops Will Get Attacked

¶14. (S) Turning to the question of how Turkish troops might be received (a key point in the GOT's analysis about whether to send Turkish troops), Karaosmanoglu said that some Iraqi interlocutors who claimed in group meetings to oppose the presence of foreign troops, in private were receptive to the idea of a Turkish troop contribution, provided the Turks came as peacekeepers, not occupiers, and preferably under a UN mandate and not as part of a US force. Karaosmanoglu claimed that 95-98 percent of the Iraqis he met were receptive to the idea of Turkish troops, including non-KDP and non-PUK Kurds.

15. (S) Karaosmanoglu told us he had come to the conclusion that even if Turkish troops were widely welcomed, they would be attacked by someone, somewhere. Inevitable Turkish casualties would then lead to tensions between Turkey and the Iraqi people, and perhaps between Turkey and the US. However, if Turkey decided not to send troops, it would be at odds with US. Whether Turkey decides to send troops or not, any US failure in Iraq would become Turkey's failure, he said. The DCM replied that if Turkey decided not to send troops, it would be letting others determine Turkey's risks. Karaosmanoglu then said that he had not been asked for a recommendation on this, but if asked he would support a Turkish deployment, but to the right sector - not near Kurds or Turkmen or Iranians - where there is the least violence. He also said any Turkish deployment should try to learn from the coalition forces mistakes (especially regarding issues of cultural sensitivity). If Turkey were to send troops and experience failure in Iraq, he said, it would be a disaster for the GOT.

16. (S) Karaosmanoglu said his delegation noticed there were Iraqis all over, including some who reportedly tailed the Turkish delegation. He reported that Ba'ath activists he met said that they did not have a single leader to unite them. Karaosmanoglu said that it was a mistake to consider all Ba'athists bad guys, though some no doubt were. He said much of Iraq's mischief was being made by Wahabbists, including non-Iraqis. Most Iraqis Karaosmanoglu met, he said, were not anti-US, although many were opposed to the US Administration. He urged that the US take measure to retain the support of Iraq's secular, western-oriented society. If we failed to do so, it would be a disaster, he said. In this regard, CIMIC activity was critical.

Iraqis Fear Civil War, Partition

17. (C) Karaosmanoglu, who had also visited Iraq in May, said there was more of a war atmosphere during his August/Sept. trip (note: in May he was mostly in the more stable north, while this time he was mainly in Baghdad). However, he noted that some improvements were readily apparent, especially the visible presence of Iraqi police. He said that in his conversations with Iraqis, they told him they felt the situation was on a razor's edge, and could lead to either civil war or partition. There was a great contradiction in the average position between rejection of occupation and recognition that coalition forces were needed to prevent chaos. Tribal chiefs he met said they did not think that US troops would survive the Iraqi summer. When they did, the chiefs were surprised and admired the Americans' tenacity.

Karaosmanoglu Suggestions for CPA/CJTF-7

18. (C) Karaosmanoglu had a number of suggestions for CPA and CJTF-7 based on his observations. He said that the CPA should employ more Iraqis, including hiring ex-generals who had been dissidents and giving them positions of authority. He recommended that the CPA make more of an effort to give Iraqis ownership of the situation. He advocated developing regional CBMs to build bonds across borders with Arab neighbors whom the Iraqis view with great suspicion. He stressed the importance of accommodating the tribal system and enfranchising the tribes in the new Iraq. He opined that there was a need for more military-CPA coordination. He suggested that the US start a sister-city/school twinning program with cities and schools in Iraq. Finally, he noted (reflecting the national Turkish preoccupation with Iraq) that the Iraqis' main concern was partition. He said we should counter that concern by emphasizing the path to full sovereignty and the non-violability of Iraqi borders.

19. Comment: Karaosmanoglu is thoughtful, pragmatic and cautiously optimistic. He advocates a Turkish approach to Iraq that gets away from the past obsession with the north, the possibility of a Kurdish state and the KDP and PUK. Perhaps for these reasons, he is viewed by others at the MFA with some skepticism. By his own account, he was not asked for his views on whether or not Turkish troops should deploy to Iraq, and doubts he will be asked to remain involved in Iraqi affairs at the MFA.

110. (U) Baghdad Minimize Considered.
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